



Water Quality Advisory Group

MISSION: To recommend policies, programs, and priorities that protect, maintain, and/or restore the biological, chemical and physical integrity of County streams, rivers, wetlands, groundwater, lakes, and other water resources.

2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WATER QUALITY ADVISORY GROUP TO THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND COUNTY COUNCIL

Established by the Water Quality Discharge Law, the Water Quality Advisory Group (WQAG) is required to report once a year to the County Executive and Council on its activities and findings. This report discusses the issues confronted by the WQAG during the past year and summarizes its activities and recommendations during 2011, and planned areas of focus for 2012. The leadership of the group continued with two co-chairs: Carol Henry and Daphne Pee. Furthermore, the WQAG continued its focus and organized itself into subcommittees to address three broad subject areas: (1) Development and Environmental Site Design (ESD), (2) Pollution Reduction, and (3) Emerging Issues. There were several new members added, and although new members are onboard, there is still a need for additional members, particularly from the business community. WQAG members continue various efforts to contact people in the County to solicit membership for these vacancies.

In addressing the issues of water quality in 2011, the WQAG relied on the expertise of its members, as well as consulting subject-matter experts, staff, and department representatives to present information and options on the broad areas identified as 2011 priorities. Subcommittees further explored these subject areas and brought preliminary recommendations to entire Group. This consultative process informed the WQAG's deliberations on its 2011 actions and recommendations. The WQAG meetings included presentations organized by the subcommittees to regularly bring in outside speakers and technical experts to brief the WQAG on how the issues affect or are implemented in the County, and to share their perspectives.

Summary of 2011 Activities and Recommendations

1). Pollution Reduction Subcommittee

Review of pilot Phase II Bay TMDL watershed plans

Ron Bowen provided a very detailed presentation on the Anne Arundel County pilot project to develop a Phase II Bay TMDL watershed implementation plan. He noted the two pilots in Maryland, the one in Anne Arundel County as a suburban example and then Caroline County on the Eastern Shore as a largely rural example.

2). Development/Environmental Site Design Subcommittee

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ESD Tour and MS4 Permit Monitoring

The Development/ESD subcommittee arranged for a tour of a local residential development that utilizes various technologies from the Environmental Site Design suite. As a matter of priority, the subcommittee has closely monitored progress of the County's mandate to implement 'ESD to the Maximum Extent Practicable (MEP).' This required close interaction with various County agencies and their perspectives on MS-4 Permit implementation.

Montgomery County Tree Canopy

Several guest speakers from Parks and from DNR presented on tree coverage in the county. Based on the efforts of the county to create offsets for development, the concept of the tree bank was discussed. Recent development has caused a significant decline in tree coverage, as well as an increase in pervious surfaces, which both represent a threat to water quality. This was the basis for one of the initiatives taken on by the WQAG. The group struggled with Maryland's pledge in the 2001 Anacostia Restoration Agreement to expand the Anacostia watershed forest cover. Construction of the ICC has reduced and fragmented forest canopy in the watershed. The WQAG drafted a letter recommending that Montgomery County ask Maryland to identify sites in the Anacostia for reforestation.

4) Emerging Issues Subcommittee Triclosan

The soap ingredient triclosan was also discussed at length, as triclosan is a cause for concern in discharge of wastewater from treatment plants. Unlike traditional water pollutants, treatment plants are not equipped to deal with triclosan and other novel threats. A letter which recommended limiting the sale of soaps and detergents with triclosan in the county was drafted to address this emerging contaminant.

Priority topics for 2012

The WQAG continues to monitor activities to advocate for programs and requirements that protect water quality in Montgomery County. As part of the ongoing effort, the WQAG and its three subcommittees expect to address the following in 2012.

1) Development and Environmental Site Design

The subcommittee will continue to follow the Zoning Code Re-Write process to ensure the new Code fully adopts ESD to MEP and removes impediments to its implementation. Outreach and inter-agency cooperation to optimize ESD adoption will be a high priority. The subcommittee also plans to examine specific topics like rainwater and greywater reuse, illicit discharges, green streets, and the ESD permitting process.

2) Pollution Reduction

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We continue to understand ways in which the County can better protect water quality through pollution reduction. We are following the state initiative for sustainable communities, and are looking at this as a way to model the County's efforts for pollution reduction. We will continue to follow efforts to forest parts of the county and decrease pervious surfaces to reduce runoff and the impacts of stormwater.

3) Emerging Issues

We continue to monitor the issues of contaminants enter our waters and exploring what tools and knowledge can be shared to better inform residents about these water quality issues. The Drug Take back initiative supported in the past is one that we are considering for promotion once again this year.

As the WQAG continues its activities in 2012, we will continue to assess topics that appear to have implications to water quality; and consistent with our role, to continue to make recommendations to the County Executive and Council on these matters.

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